



## Travis County Medical Examiner

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### Safe sleep environments help prevent infant suffocation

For many, the arrival of cool fall weather means it's time to make beds cozy with blankets, but parents and caregivers of infants should remember that their little ones do not need blankets. Instead, they need a safe sleep environment—alone, on their backs and in a crib without bedding.

This year, the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office has seen seven infant accidental-suffocation deaths, all of which are associated with the risk factor of bed sharing and/or sleeping in an unsafe sleep environment. In 2015, there were 12 suffocation deaths of infants, with the overwhelming majority occurring in infants less than one year of age. These deaths are preventable.

To help prevent infant accidental-suffocation deaths, the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommends the **A-B-Cs** of safe sleep. Babies should sleep:

- **Alone.** Bed sharing, which is sleeping with a baby on a bed, couch, floor, or in a chair, is dangerous. Babies should sleep alone, not with an adult, child or animal. Room sharing with a baby is a better way to sleep near your little one.
- **On their Back.** Not on their side or tummy. Place babies on their back for every sleep time, including naps and at night.
- **In a safety-approved Crib.** Put babies on a firm surface, preferably a safety-approved crib with a firm crib mattress covered by a fitted sheet. Do not use bedding material (for example, bumper pads, pillows, blankets) or allow clutter in the sleep environment (for example, soft toys or stuffed animals). Safety-approved bassinets, play yards and portable cribs are also acceptable.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the leading cause of all infant accidental deaths is suffocation and strangulation in bed—not the more publicized causes of death, such as traffic fatalities and drowning. Together, we can reduce this cause of infant death by eliminating dangerous sleep environments that can result in suffocation.

For more information contact, Marissa Valencia, Travis County Medical Examiner's Office Deputy Chief Investigator, at 512-854-4425, or go to: [www.traviscountytx.gov/Medical\\_Examiner](http://www.traviscountytx.gov/Medical_Examiner).

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